



AT THE SERVICE OF THE CHILD /YOUTH IN PORTUGAL

The *Instituto de Apoio à Criança (IAC)* (Child Support Institute) is a Private Welfare Institution, created on the 14th of March 1983, by a group of people from different professional areas – doctors, magistrates, professors, psychologists, jurists, sociologists, social workers, educators and many others.

It is a non-profitable association, that has as main objective the child's full development, in the defence and promotion of his rights, the child seen fully as a basic subject of rights in the different areas, whether health, education, social security or in his spare time.

Aims to stimulate, support and disclose the work of all those that are preoccupied with finding new answers for infancy problems in Portugal, as well as collaborating with national and international counterpart institutions.

As Dr. João dos Santos¹ used to say, an infancy policy should be the work of the whole community, with its active and generalised participation and in coordinated work with the different institutions.

In accordance with its statutes the *IAC* realises:

1. Information and Sensitisation programs;
2. Support and innovating experiences that aim at the full development of the child and his interaction with the involving surrounding;
3. Studies, seminars, conference and other initiatives that allow the debate and the reflection on the infancy problems in society today;
4. Opinions and other positions taken on aspects of general policies regarding the promotion of the child's rights.

Regarding point 2) and to answer the problems that came up, the *IAC* created the following sectors:

- a) SOS – Child
- b) Projecto Rua (Street Project)
- c) Leisure Activity (AL)
- d) Humanisation of Attending Children in Health Services
- e) Liaisons Actions to the Community (LAC)
- f) Legal Support Centre
- g) Centre of Studies and Documentation for Infancy
- h) IAC –“Building Together” Forum (new designation for the Regional Nucleus of Coimbra)

¹Portuguese pedopsychiatrist and psychoanalyst, founder of the IAC, already deceased



The *SOS – Criança* was created in 1988, as an anonymous and confidential telephone service, in a national scope.

It is a prevention service that wants to in a direct and/or articulated way, support orientate and guide the multiplicity of situations that are presented daily.

Presently, the service also has a PO box, personalised attendance (legal, social and psychological) re-evaluation and a service of school mediation implanted in different schools in the Lisbon area, designated by GAAF's (*Gabinete de Apoio ao Aluno e a Família* – Student and Family Support Office).

The school mediation, through a work in partnership, can obtain conjugated responses that were revealed to be efficient in the solution of a set of problems (school absence, school dropout, violence and other risk situations).

The methodology used privileges the individual and informal approach on site and in articulation with all the partners.

Presently and since May last year, the *SOS – Criança* has a specific telephone number - 1410 – in the scope of a support Project for missing and sexually abused children.

This project was the culmination of an established partnership, since June 2001 with the Child Focus (European Centre for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children) – with its head office in Brussels – and following the integration of the *IAC* (only Portuguese institution) in the European Federation for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children.

This promoted the constitution of an International Directory of Organisations working in the field of missing and sexually exploited children - Resolution 2001/C 283/01 of the European Council.

In a continuous line, the *IAC*, on the 24th of May 2004 signed a Protocol of co-operation with the Internal Affairs Ministry that produced various arguments, one of which the creation of the already mentioned telephone line.

This project also counts on the collaboration of *Projecto Rua* (whose intervention we will describe later) that will co-operate through teams on the streets, in the effective search for run away children at risk in the city of Lisbon, as well as in the definition of the reinsertion plans of the Residence Communities.

Also the *Construir Juntos* (Network Building Together), constituted in 1997, in the scope of *Projecto Rua* and now revitalised, counts on contributing for the optimisation of answers from the *Projecto* scattering, for example, search messages, along side the partners and informing, attending, guiding, in articulation with the *IAC*, the child victim and/or his family, in its influence, besides promoting the articulation of the local institutions with the Civil Authorities and the Police.

This project still engages itself, amongst other things, in the promotion of sensitisation campaigns on the issue and joins together with the Police and/or Children and Youth Protection Commissions in the scope of lawsuits regarding missing and sexual exploited children.



The Entertainment Activity Sector, functioning since 1983, plans:

- To guarantee that all the children have the right to play; contribute to recognise the academic, educational and socio-cultural role that the entertainment activity develops in the life of each individual and of each group; preserve the identity, the conservation and the renovation of the game and the toy as cultural patrimony, making evident the relations between the entertainment activity and the development activities in the scope of teaching, education, health and cultural life scope, promoting the interdisciplinarity and the global approaches of the problems related to the children and youth development; give specific training to those responsible for the education, health and well being of the children and the youths; incentive the creation of locations, time and entertainment materials, indoors, outdoors and with an interactive character.

The beneficiaries are the professionals of different areas, namely professors, educational auxiliaries, Cultural and Recreational Associations, Municipalities, Schools, Hospitals, etc.

Realise various training actions, on different themes (related with the leisure activity), technical follow-up of projects on leisure locations and leisure centres, scientific orientation of investigation work, organisation and disclosing documents on the leisure activity, analysis, listings and classification of games and toys.



Since 1989, the Humanisation Sector of Attending Children Services also intervenes having as main objective promoting a discussion of the humanisation problems, and, finally, propose strategies of intervention and support actions in its scope.

The beneficiaries are professionals and health and public services in general.

Amongst the main activities realised by this sector, there includes:

- Organisation of meetings and seminars of a local, regional, and national scope;
- Realisation of studies on the different aspects of Humanisation Sector of Attending Children Services
- Elaboration and disclosure of documents
- Disclosure of the Hospitalised Child's Chart
- Organisation of the training actions
- Disclosure of recommendations through the media
- Collaboration with counterpart Association



The *ALC's* started in 1992, after the gathering and analysis of the situations and cases that the people and organisations of the Ajuda² community presented to the *IAC*.

Thus, the *ALC's* became a strategy action destined to generate institutional, interinstitutional and social attitudes and conducts that in co-ordination at various levels, contribute for the full and harmonious development of the child.

² Neighbourhood in Lisbon near the IAC office



Its main objectives are:

- Co-operate in the primary prevention
- Facilitate the change of institutional attitudes and conducts, centring the child
- Promote the constitution of natural networks
- Encourage a coordinated management in the communitarian organisation
- Making profitable the resources of the community giving the means to the social environment

The main beneficiaries are the Community, Local Municipality, Health and Educating Institutions, Children/Youths and Families.

To reach the objectives exposed, this sector makes the following activities

- Work with the services and institutions whose action has as user the child, such as: School, Health Centre, Kindergartens and Local Municipalities
- Realisation of studies on the child, with the support of the universities
- Support, orientation and collaboration in university training
- Framework of Youth Volunteering

The *ALC's* have a work methodology that privileges the volunteer action and aims various interventions in the sociological educational scope with its objectives already enounced.



The *Atendimento Juridico* Legal help started its activity in 1994 and was created from the need to inform and clarify the people that look for the *IAC* to know about children's rights.

As main activities of this sector we have personalised, telephone and written attendance of cases.

Also highlighted is the participation in Actions and Meetings on the "Childs Rights" the information of the existing legal mechanisms in view to render effective the Rights in the area of Infancy and actualisation of all the legislation relating to the Child's Rights.



The *CEDI* started functioning in 1991, because of the need, that was felt, for information on the child.

Giving support not only to the *IAC* technicians but to all the technicians linked to the child issue, to students from various study levels and the community in general.

Its activity includes the gathering, treatment and disclosure of information, the promotion of contacts with counterpart institutions, the support to the production of the Bulletin and other *IAC* publications, the organisation of documental exhibitions and support to the realisation of congresses and other events and also the actualisation and online availability of the *IAC* site.

To answer the needs of the child from Coimbra³, appeared, in 1992, the *IAC* – Regional Nucleus of Coimbra, directed by the same principles and objectives statutorily defined by the *IAC*.

As it is an extension of the *IAC* it has, necessarily, objectives and functions of extension adequate to the intervention area.

Its intervention includes actions of sensitisation, entertainment activity and animation – support projects and intervention – sheltering and guiding the families, technicians and others that search for counselling or orientation, in order to solve issue situations.

Having, also an intervention in child shelter institutions, dinamisation of a volunteer project and a Documentation Centre.

In regards to the *Projecto Rua*, created in 1989, its goal is for the reduction of the number of children and youths at risk.

The project was set up to respond to the vast number of children that were found roaming and sleeping in the Lisbon town centre, living by their wits (parking cars, begging, selling small objects and petty theft).



Street animators and technicians, through a personalised relationship, establishing later contacts with the families, realising various activities, placing the youths in training and exercise (this meaning learning to do, in the company itself) search to integrate these youths in the Family and Community.

This was the main objective, besides annulling the marginality situation, opening paths for the future, in the social and economical context of the community where those children/youths lived.

Wanting to adopt a healthy and an emotionally balanced life style; the return to school or to other educational system, in a professional career, the participation in activities and the acquisition of the values necessary to the life in a community.

To allow a better integration and prevent the appearance of new cases, around 1993, (entering in the 2nd phase – 1993-2001) the *Projecto* fixed teams in the Residency Communities (*Bairro 6* of May, Patio 207, Bairro Olival do Pancas and Bairro do Condado) of the children that we found on the street.

In this phase – based in 3 areas – Recuperate (1st line work with special incidence in prevention); Develop (prevention of new risk situations and development of the Residency Communities); and Revaluating (change mentalities, attitudes and policies in view to a new look on the issue of child at risk), the Project started to strongly stimulate the partnership relations that appear definitely implemented in the 3rd and 4th phase of the *Projecto* (having started the last one in October 2004).

During this 2nd phase, besides the on site work on issues in the Lisbon areas, implemented through the team of the Run Away Community in the Residency Communities, went from working individually, cases, to working in teams, with the children, youths and the families.

The “*casinhas*”(little houses) were here of great importance (equipment in the Residency Communities that sheltered the team and target group, together daily,

³ City at the centre of Portugal

found an open space for each group, where existed the availability of time, the capacity to listen, the possibility to play, to experiment new materials, to play roles, sing, dance, etc.)

The communities started to grow as a whole, to identify the needs and resources.

Local leaders appeared, that started to work in favour of the community, (cleaning the neighbourhood, family babysitter, meal delivery services, and school animators).

Resident Associations and Social Recreational Associations were constituted.

In light of the progressive autonomisation of those communities, the *Projecto* started to take up a posture of transition and the role of the partners in the guidance and resolution of the issue situations started to be emphasised.

The population of the Patio 208 was relocated, searching for us now only to resolve subjects related with the Resident Association.

With the Bairro 6 de Maio we were active partners at the time of the intervention of the Program Choices – Crime Prevention and Insertion of Youth Program – (2001-2004). Today we continue our relationship with the Bairro, namely in an education action denominated “*Aprender na Rua*” “Learn on the Street” whose aim is to promote, together with the local institutions, the healthy occupation of children/youths that are on the street, in the neighbourhood, motivating them to go to school.

Through the 3rd phase of the *Projecto* (starting in 2001) fruit of a diagnostic made by the street team, new characteristics from the streets children and youths appeared, some involved in the “worst forms of child exploitation work” (begging, prostitution, drug trafficking).

At this time new strategies were delineated for the *Projecto* and for the action on the street being a factor of great symbolism, the acquisition of an Academic Entertainment Mobile Unit, equipped with enticing material (video games, computers, video, games, skates, etc.) that search to mobilise the target group to work in the “here and now”.

Nowadays the *Projecto* is structured in 3 levels of intervention:

Levels of Intervention

1st level (recuperate)

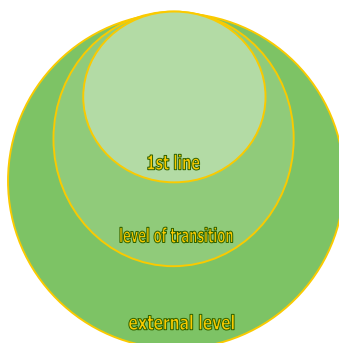
☞ NUCLEUS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- . Intervention of first line next to the children and youngsters from the streets;
- . SOS work facing the indicated situations of the children on the street and/or in dangerous situations;
- . Education in open regime

external level (revalue)

☞ NUCLEUS OF SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

- . Sharing a visibility of the philosophy and methodology intervention at a national and international level;
- . Support and dynamization of partnership;
- . Participation in the empowerment at a national and European level, transmitting the opinion of the target group;



level of transition (revalue)

☞ NUCLEUS OF SUPPORT TO THE COMMUNITIES

☞ INTEGRATED PROJECT OF OLIVAL DO PANÇAS

- . Link between the Education and Training Nucleus and the institutions of the Communities from the minor's origin, in view to its integration;



During this period, the Integrated Model of the *Projecto* became definitely implemented, in the *Bairro Olival do Pancas* (neighbourhood in Lisbon), as reference an integrated and multidisciplinary team that promotes the interinstitutional articulation in relation to the planning and realisation of joint actions.

In this way, it involves the partners in a dynamic way, viewing the creation of synergies and flexible corridors of information in the attempt to solve the issue cases.

Another of the more relevant dynamics during this phase was the approach and integration of the youths by other youths (exercising the role of mediators), namely in the *Bairro do Condado* (neighbourhood in Lisbon), having this methodology culminating in a training for Young Community Mediators, (also) from other neighbourhoods.

In parallel and in front of the gaps found in the intervention, taking into account the mutations and needs of the target group (fruit of a dynamic diagnostic that we always practiced), at this time we are trying to set up, a Educative/Training Project, that will search to promote new beneficiaries – youths from 12 to 18 years old, in/from the street and/or at risk, for which the schools do not constitute an efficient alternative, the acquisition of school and professional skills and certifications. For its development, the teams of the Run Away Community and the *Bairro do Condado* (neighbourhood in Lisbon) constituted a sole team – the Nucleus of Education/Training (NEF).

The three levels referred to above continued to be articulated amongst themselves, since the complexity of the integration of the youths, the disclosure of methodologies and the articulation between partners, aiming, lastly, to the development/implementation of integrated projects, thus determine.

The *Projecto Rua* works in this way, with the methodology centred in the education/training, using entertainment as an academic helper, through a personalised relationship which allies with affectivity and technique, "being with", resorting in the multidisciplinary teams and reinforcing the work in partnership.

With more or lesser specificities and reach, a lesser or more internal articulation, with less or more human resources, all the sectors and activities are directed in favour of a more dignified life for the children and youths, having, specially, in account, the problems of the more vulnerable ones.